

FORD'S METHODS OF REMAKING HUMAN DERELICTS

Famous Philanthropist Applies Horse Sense to ex-Convicts in His Man Factory With Wonderful Results

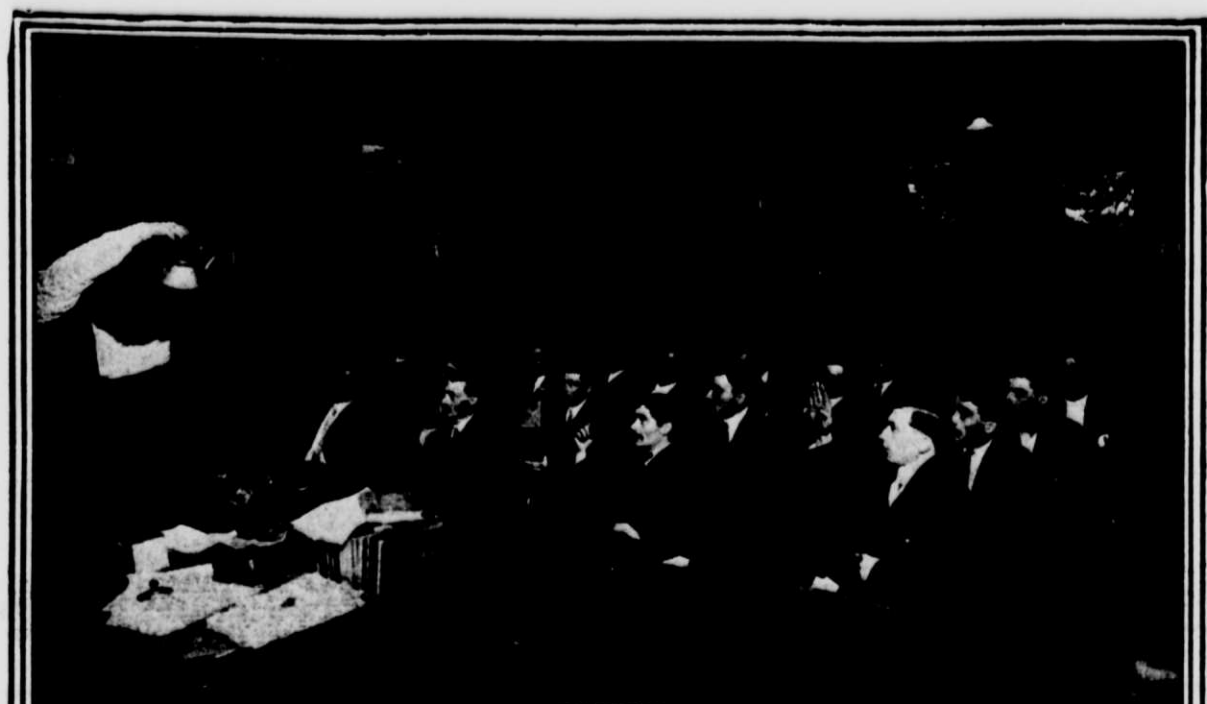
CAN Henry Ford make good? When the automobile manufacturer told the United States Commission on Industrial Relations recently that he could take every convict in Sing Sing and make a man of him, he invited an examination of his ability to do so. Every thinking mind began to ask whether it was simply a casual assertion or a real expression of ability supported by an efficient plan, a working plant and actual accomplishments.

"If you can do that," I said to him just after he had made his remarkable statement, "you must have a man factory in Highland Park."

"I can do it," he replied, "but I do not claim to have a man factory. I have an automobile factory where we do something more than turn out machines. The best thing for you to do is to come out to Detroit and see exactly what we are doing and

become does not enter into consideration, and this is where Henry Ford's system of employing men who have not lived righteous lives differs from any other. The only matter taken into account is what the man is to-day—the frame of mind he is in at the moment the inspector calls upon him. He may have been a bank burglar or a holdup man, a forger or a murderer, but if he displays an inclination to do right and to go to work, he may be pretty sure that within a day or two he will be wearing a Ford badge and have a place in the factory. Past records don't count and promises for the future are not taken into consideration, and there is always room for one more in this big plant.

But a successful applicant is watched. Nobody realizes more than these people do that promises of reform are easily broken and that good intentions have their assigned place in the infernal regions unless they are



His Sociological Department, Costing \$9,000 a Month, Cares for 14,000 Men Without Spying

"Say," he said, "do you know what they are telling me down in the shop?"

"No, What?"

"That that was the boss that shook hands with me—the big boss that owns the works. Was it?"

"Sure," answered Mr. Hawkins. "Why not?"

"Well," said Bill, as he slouched over to a corner to hide a moisture in his eyes, "if Henry Ford will walk into his shop and shake hands with a man like me, he can have all I've got. Anybody who wouldn't go straight for a man like that is a fool and deserves all he gets."

All the office heads and some others write letters to the hard cases who have been brought to the factory through their personal attention, but never upon office stationery. They are private and personal communications, and not in any sense official. Here is a copy of the letter Mr. Hawkins wrote to Bill on the first day he came to work. It is a fair sample of many others written to such people:

MY DEAR BILL: To-day I hope you will begin your new Ford job with a fixed determination to fill it every minute from every standpoint, from bell tap to cell tap, so that you will qualify quickly for a permanent and substantial place on the payroll of this great big organization.

You have had a lot of ups and downs and the greater portion of your life has been mispent, although I have just

to solitary confinement in the dark cell for the long period of thirteen months.

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WHERE HE LIVED BEFORE HE WENT TO WORK FOR FORD.

HIS HOME SIX MONTHS AFTER ENTERING FORD'S EMPLOY.

find out what we have done. Then you can judge for yourself. Words never count for much in this world. It's deeds."

So I went to Detroit and thence to Highland Park unannounced. One of the first questions I asked was:

"You say you can make men; what do you call a man?"

The answer came quickly:

"One who stands four square to the world in reference to the functions that should be absolutely right with regard to himself, those who are dependent upon him and society in general."

"How do you make men?"

"By the application of horse sense," E. G. Liebold, secretary to Mr. Ford, conducted me through the extensive works—they cover sixty acres, he said—during the first hour; and I spent two days there, looking and questioning, mostly questioning. Every one in a while Mr. Liebold would explain to me something about how a particular part was being handled and the relation of part and handling to the mechanical system and the finished automobile. I told him that the interest was not in automobiles nor how they were made; not in the efficiency of Mr. Ford's manufacturing plant, nor in anything else that had to do with mechanics, machinery or business economics, nor even in his profit sharing plan, but in his man factory; how they made men, not how they made automobiles. If that was anywhere about I wanted to find it. So he opened every department in the factory to me and gave me every facility for investigating; as did the other lieutenants of Henry Ford as I met them, one after another.

In the Ford sociological department, which has charge of the man making, there are records of more than 500 men who were put to work in the factory solely because they needed the uplift of work and good pay to turn them from ways of evil into ways of good. But what is more remarkable, there is no record of a single man among them who had to be dropped because he returned to the kind of life he formerly lived. Among them are 150 men who have served terms in various prisons for crimes ranging from murder to petty theft; the terms ranged from thirty-four years behind the bars to a few months. Most of these ex-convicts are counted among the best and most faithful workmen in the departments and in the labor to which they are assigned.

The sociological department employs a force of eighty men, all under the supervision of John R. Lee, who is assisted as he puts it, by every man in the factory, from Mr. Ford to the humblest worker about the shops. Forty of these men are inspectors; the remainder are subordinate executives, stenographers and clerks. The direct cost of the sociological department approximates \$9,000 a month.

When there seems to be some good reason for considering the acceptance of an application for a job, the name and address of the applicant are given to an inspector, who jumps into one of the many automobiles kept for just such use and goes to the address given. There he sees the applicant and his family, if he has any, and examines the conditions under which he lives. The inspector gets a fairly complete history of the man's present condition.

What he has been or what he may

supported by actual performances. Every one of the 14,000 men comes under the purview of the sociological department at least three times a year, whether he has a bad record or has all his life lived a decent and respectable life.

But there is no prying or spying. No inspector goes about among the man's tradespeople to find if he pays his bills or asks his neighbors if he is beating his wife. The man himself is seen and questioned, usually in the presence of his wife or some other relative or friend, and always at his home or boarding house, and his statements are taken absolutely on faith, without doubt or hesitation, unless there is reason to believe that he is concealing something. In the latter event he is faced with facts or reports and asked for an explanation.

If he has fallen from grace he is encouraged to take a fresh grip on himself and make another try of it. If he does not indicate repentance for a misdeed or for wrong living he is punished, but not discharged. How he is punished will be told later.

It might be supposed that the men would object to this constant and persistent watching of their private lives and resent it. As a matter of fact I made several trips on trolley cars on which workmen quitting with their various shifts were returning to their homes for the express purpose of getting into apparently casual conversation with them and finding out how they felt about this and some other matters incident to their employment in the Ford works. Not one of the number to whom I suggested that objection might well be made failed to reply that watching certainly was a good thing for many of the men, and that was good for one was good for all. Probably the boldness and the openness of the watchfulness saves it from being misconstrued and resented.

Of course the duty of the inspector goes further than simply to make a report. Of the large number of foremen employed in the factory, many of them fluent in the English language, some are bound to be dwelling amid conditions which do not make for mental and moral improvement. It is the business of the inspector not only to note this but also to suggest, but never insist, that the man seek other and more improving quarters and associates. Congenial and uplifting environment, socially and industrially, is the keynote upon which the entire sociological work in Highland Park is built, and Mr. Ford holds that with both of these no man can go wrong.

Some of the men, both before and after employment, are found to be living in hovels or herded together in crowded and unsanitary boarding houses and surrounded by people who have uncertain ideas of right and wrong. They are urged to move and the way is made easy for them to do so. Not with money, but through steady employment at good wages, which guarantee to a man an ability to pay for a fair living amid beneficial surroundings.

Naturally this has worked wonders in the style of living of the men. A large number of them own their homes, having advanced step by step from squalid surroundings to dwellings, which, both within and without, make others who are less fortunate or less industrious envious or enlative. Some photographs taken by the sociological department showing the improvement in style of living answer

partly, at least, the question, "Can Henry Ford make good?"

Especially with men who have been criminals does the sociological department concern itself; not necessarily because it desires to, and never unless actual need arises. But almost daily some special activity of this kind is made necessary. Here is one case that occurred while I was in the factory.

A woman telephoned that she wished to speak to this department. Over the wire she told the executive to whom she was directed that the wife of one of the workmen had asked her to inform the factory that her husband, who had been employed in the works for several months, was giving indications of losing his hold. She wanted the Ford people to see if they could not help him.

That night an inspector called upon the man and found him apparently yielding to the temptations of his former companions. The cheery word, the pat on the back, the encouraging smile of this inspector, all given without the slightest suggestion of patronage, seemed to have the desired effect and the man expressed a renewed determination to take a stronger grip than ever and keep straight for what there was in it for him and his family.

Another case, one that had gone a little further, approached a conclusion at the same time. A man now 24 years old had taken a girl away from her home and fled to Indiana. Her mother followed him and had him arrested. He was sent to prison, but his behavior was such that he was paroled. He married the girl and tried to make a home for her.

Driven from place to place because he was a paroled convict and apparently for no other reason, he applied for and secured work in the Ford factory. He brought his wife and their two children to Detroit and there set up a pleasant and comfortable home. Unfortunately, however, he thus violated his parole and the Indiana officers sent out a police warning for him. He was traced to the Ford works and arrested.

Mr. Ford himself took up the matter and, after a thorough investigation and a long talk with the young man, laid all the facts before the Governor of Indiana and asked for Executive clemency. I myself saw the long telegram from the Governor which arrived while I was there, expressing his sympathy and interest, and saying that a pardon would probably be issued

within a few days. Meantime the man was paroled to the Ford factory, continuing his work and supporting his children and his wife, who is devoted to him. Right living and fair workmanship seem to be all that counts with these people.

Take one of the many instances shown by the records of the sociological department, in which families have been brought together and are living in comfort and harmony. It was discovered that a man who had been at work in the factory for a long time had abandoned his wife and two children in Canada five years ago, and set up another domestic establishment in Highland Park. The matter was discussed with him, but he said he could not and would not live with his wedded wife; he would give up his job first. After several interviews he consented to meet his abandoned wife and talk the matter over.

At his expense the woman was sent for. An inspector met her at Windsor, just across the river on the Canadian side, to conduct her to the interview. The immigration inspector refused to allow her to enter this country because she had no means of support. The man was taken to Windsor, therefore, to meet her. After a long talk he said he would break up his present establishment and take her back. Still the immigration inspector insisted that the plan was hazardous and would not allow her to enter.

So the man took a house in Windsor and is living there to-day with his wife and children. Only a few days ago—and the reunion occurred nearly a year ago—he came to one of the executives of the sociological department and thanked him for bringing them together, saying that he was happier and more contented and that his wife was all he formerly thought she was not. More than fifty families have been reunited in this way.

Take another case. One evening last summer a rough and tough looking individual rang the bell of the residence of N. A. Hawkins, the Ford sales manager. Mr. Hawkins answered it himself and a conversation something like this took place:

"Are you Hawkins of Ford's works?"

"I am. What can I do for you?"

"Give me a job. I am a burglar and a holdup man and I've served twenty years in several prisons for my crimes. I'm tired of it all and want a job; and I'm going to get it or somebody is going to suffer."

"Is that so? Well, what will you do if I don't give you a job?"

"I'll get mine. I've a wife to support and I'm going to get some money for her and me." The man unfashioned a suspender button and pulled a black-jack from inside his trousers. "I live at No. — street," mentioning a very tough neighborhood, "and I'll use this on somebody before I get home. If I can't get money honestly I'll get it dishonestly."

"Put that thing away," said Mr. Hawkins, "and come and see me in the morning. But don't bring the black-jack with you. If you have to go hungry between now and then go hungry. Just to see how much you mean by saying that you want to get money honestly, I won't give you any and if I hear of a holdup to-night between here and where you live I'll—well, I'll give you such a talking to when you come to my office to-morrow that you won't forget it in a long time."

The man came in the morning and got his job. He is at work there still and behaving himself excellently. He is carrying a bullet in his body that Sergeant McDonald of the Detroit police fired into him after a daring burglary, literally blowing him off the roof of a three-story house. That he landed in a big snowdrift was all that saved his life. He comes now to Mr. Hawkins's office every once in a while to talk with him, for anybody has access to any man in the office building any time he has need to see him. Not long ago Bill opened a bank account.

"The first time I ever went into a bank," he told Mr. Hawkins, "except to get the lay of it or to rob it."

Recently Mr. Hawkins, who says he is not more interested in this case than in a number of others, asked Mr. Ford to go into the factory and shake hands with this ex-burglar and strong arm man. They strolled about without any apparent object until they came to where Bill was working. Bill was stooping over and Mr. Hawkins hit him a slap on the seat of his trousers hard enough to make him straighten up.

"Hello, Bill," said Mr. Hawkins. "I want you to shake hands with Mr. Ford."

In the din of the factory Bill did not quite distinguish the name, but he stuck out a black and grimy paw and gripped the hand of Mr. Hawkins's companion with a will. Nothing was said about him or his life or his work, and the men passed on. That afternoon after quitting time Bill came to Mr. Hawkins's office.

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It is really much easier to go straight than crooked, and it's a thousand per cent more profitable from every standpoint.

Number — street is not the place from which you can make the right turn. In my opinion your work will be easier and your mind more at rest if you will locate somewhere out in Highland Park within easy walking distance of the factory.

Don't think I am trying to advise you everything you ought to do all at once, but please get this thought straight. Whenever I offer or try to help a fellow I go clear through with it, depending only upon the fellow himself to help me all he can, so the job of making a new man out of the old one will be well done.

Profit and loss in trade means profit and loss in men, and the Ford spirit is one of making men as well as making automobiles.

So long, therefore, as you behave yourself and do your work and try to get yourself on the straight line you needn't fear that any detrimental results from blueprints or brass buttons will affect your place or standing with us.

In my opinion no amount of jail will ever civilize a brotherhood. And no amount of brotherhood will ever civilize jail. A man is sent "over the road" because he is bad according to law, but many a man is often bad according to law and good according to life. I am willing to believe you are good inside according to life and I am staking my position that you'll make good if given the right chance.

Drop in the office and see me any time you want to talk about your work or tell me how you are getting along. I'll always find time to see you.

Think over my suggestions about moving from — street into a different neighborhood and let's see if the road isn't a whole lot smoother living in a right environment than living where you are looked upon with suspicion and distrust. Sincerely yours,

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That is a sample of the letters that are going out all the time, though there is no sample letter. There are many of a similar kind, all written in the same strain of helpfulness and personal regard for the welfare of the men to whom they are sent; always privately and to their homes.

Think of an ex-convict being employed as a watchman, where opportunities for evil are manifold. There is one watchman in the factory drawing his \$5 a day for every working day in the year who spent thirty-four years in the Jackson, Mich., prison. He was sent up for life for murder, but was pardoned less than a year ago. At one time his conduct as a convict was so reprehensible that he was condemned

to solitary confinement in the dark cell for the long period of thirteen months.

One of the men wearing overalls in the Ford shops had been employed there before the organization of the present system, but had left. He got into financial difficulties, and to tide them over issued a number of bad checks. Caught and convicted, he wrote from the county jail to the Ford factory on the day before he was to be sentenced to prison, asking help. He was never sentenced, but he got a job and has since paid back the people he swindled by means of checks, and all his other debts as well.

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The whole country knows how a young man posed in Philadelphia as Henry Ford, Jr.—there is no such person—and cashed a number of bad checks. He did not go to jail, either, for Mr. Ford brought him to the factory and set him at work, and he is doing well and living straight.

But why multiply instances in which men are being helped to make themselves good and respectable members of the society from which they ejected themselves when they took the crooked path? There are 150 cases of criminals now at work in the plant. The few mentioned here are sufficient to show the character and the method of the work that is being done in the man factory. There are about 350 more good stories that could be told about men who were taken in time and had their wicked, perhaps crim-

inal predilections checked, and their abilities turned to the benefit of themselves and the community.

But here is another way that these people work for the good of their employees. The men working in the factory represent fifty nationalities and countries and races as follows: American, English, Scotch, German, Irish, Canadian, Slavonic, Rumanian, Hungarian, Polish, Italian, Russian, Austrian, Bulgarian, Lithuanian, Syrian, Jewish, Armenian, Turkish, Greek, Swedish, Croatian, Bohemian, Dutch, French, Arabian, Danish, Serbian, Spanish, Persian, Mexican, Norwegian, Albanian, Maltese, Sicilian, Egyptian, Cuban, Finnish, negro, Swiss, Welsh, Hindu, Japanese, Australian, Belgian, Indian, Rutherfordian. And, besides, there are 108 men there who cannot tell the countries in which they were born. Many, very many, of these foreigners cannot speak the English language. If they live in communities of their own people they might never, under ordinary conditions, learn to speak English, and the inability to understand and use the language is a serious handicap to their progress.

To teach these foreigners to speak English class rooms were provided, each capable of accommodating about forty men, sitting on benches about long tables. Fifty classes are conducted in these rooms, one giving place to the other as the men come off on their various shifts. Whether or not the men appreciate the opportunity to learn English may be gathered from the number attending. No registry of men's names is kept and no record of their attendance, but the aggregate number turned in by the teachers as attending regularly amounts to 1,100.

Nobody is required to go to this school, no time off is given for it, no bad mark is made for non-attendance and no good mark is awarded for either attendance or achievement. The whole thing is simply and absolutely up to the men themselves. No teachers are engaged for the work, either, but there are always plenty of volunteers for the work men from the shops who take their classes regularly twice a week. Some of the classes gather about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, soon after the first shift goes off. From that hour they assemble at different times up to 2 o'clock in the morning. The midnight pupils are, of course, the men who work at night.

The Berlitz method of instruction is used since the men must be treated as the youngest of young pupils. Some of them know no more about the language when they begin than a baby. Simple words are taken first and illustrated with common objects such as the men see and use every day of their lives. It seems strange to see a teacher, face freshly washed, he came from his work in the factory, standing before a lot of grown men

AN INSPECTOR FINDING OUT ABOUT A NEW MAN.

EIGHT MONTHS AFTER THE NEW MAN WENT TO WORK.

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To teach these foreigners to speak English class rooms were provided, each capable of accommodating about forty men, sitting on benches about long tables. Fifty classes are conducted in these rooms, one giving place to the other as the men come off on their various shifts. Whether or not the men appreciate the opportunity to learn English may be gathered from the number attending. No registry of men's names is kept and no record of their attendance, but the aggregate number turned in by the teachers as attending regularly amounts to 1,100.

Nobody is required to go to this school, no time off is given for it, no bad mark is made for non-attendance and no good mark is awarded for either attendance or achievement. The whole thing is simply and absolutely up to the men themselves. No teachers are engaged for the work, either, but there are always plenty of volunteers for the work men from the shops who take their classes regularly twice a week. Some of the classes gather about 3 o'clock in the afternoon, soon after the first shift goes off. From that hour they assemble at different times up to 2 o'clock in the morning. The midnight pupils are, of course, the men who work at night.

The Berlitz method of instruction is used since the men must be treated as the youngest of young pupils. Some of them know no more about the language when they begin than a baby. Simple words are taken first and illustrated with common objects such as the men see and use every day of their lives. It seems strange to see a teacher, face freshly washed, he came from his work in the factory, standing before a lot of grown men

enough confidence in human nature to believe that if a fellow like you is given a fair chance, at reasonable pay, in the right place and in the proper environment, the desire to do the honest, truthful and straightforward things in life is stimulated and strengthened to such an extent that the past and its regrets and its miserable associations are soon forgotten and wiped out, and planted in their places is the cleaner and healthier thought that there is only one way after all, and that is the right not the wrong way.

It is really much easier to go straight than crooked, and it's a thousand per cent more profitable from every standpoint.

Number — street is not the place from which you can make the right turn. In my opinion your work will be easier and your mind more at rest if you will locate somewhere out in Highland Park within easy walking distance of the factory.

Don't think I am trying to advise you everything you ought to do all at once, but please get this thought straight. Whenever I offer or try to help a fellow I go clear through with it, depending only upon the fellow himself to help me all he can, so the job of making a new man out of the old one will be well done.

Profit and loss in trade means profit and loss in men, and the Ford spirit is one of making men as well as making automobiles.

So long, therefore, as you behave yourself and do your work and try to get yourself on the straight line you needn't fear that any detrimental results from blueprints or brass buttons will affect your place or standing with us.

In my opinion no amount of jail will ever civilize a brotherhood. And no amount of brotherhood will ever civilize jail. A man is sent "over the road" because he is bad according to law, but many a man is often bad according to law and good according to life. I am willing to believe you are good inside according to life and I am staking my position that you'll make good if given the right chance.

Drop in the office and see me any time you want to talk about your work or tell me how you are getting along. I'll always find time to see you.

Think over my suggestions about moving from — street into a different neighborhood and let's see if the road isn't a whole lot smoother living in a right environment than living where you are looked upon with suspicion and distrust. Sincerely yours,

N. A. HAWKINS.

That is a sample of the letters that are going out all the time, though there is no sample letter. There are many of a similar kind, all written in the same strain of helpfulness and personal regard for the welfare of the men to whom they are sent; always privately and to their homes.

Think of an ex-convict being employed as a watchman, where opportunities for evil are manifold. There is one watchman in the factory drawing his \$5 a day for every working day in the year who spent thirty-four years in the Jackson, Mich., prison. He was sent up for life for murder, but was pardoned less than a year ago. At one time his conduct as a convict was so reprehensible that he was condemned